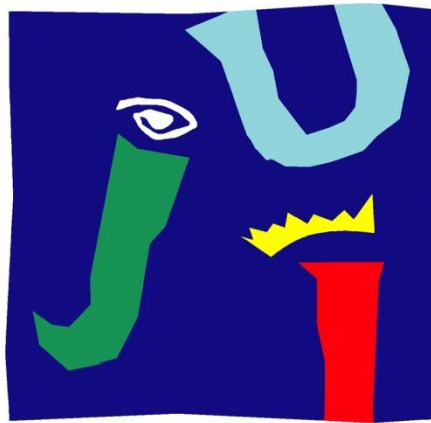


Developing Intercultural Competence through Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning: A Teaching Proposal

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List of Abbreviations

CAF – Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency	L1 – First Language
CC – Communicative Competence	L2 – Second Language and/or Foreign Language
CLT – Communicative Language Teaching	L3 – Third Language and/or Foreign Language
EFL – English as Foreign Language	MELACOM – Màster en Ensenyament i Adquisició de la Llengua Anglesa en Contextos Multilingües
ELT – English Language Teaching	S/FL – Second or Foreign Language
ESL – English as Second Language	SLA – Second Language Acquisition
FonF – Focus on Form	TBI – Task-Based Instruction
FonFs – Focus on Forms	TBLT – Task-Based Language Teaching
IC – Intercultural Competence	TL – Target Language
ICC – Intercultural Communicative Competence	

1. INTRODUCTION

So far approaches to second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) have scarcely taken into account the context features embedded in the settings where the target language was to be taught or used in. Likewise, second or foreign language instruction has traditionally paid little attention to developing those knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for learners to appropriately use the target language (TL) in a linguistically, socially, and culturally diverse society (Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Broadly speaking, language was, and in many cases still is, simply understood as a system made up of words and grammar rules the knowledge and mastery of which presumably are the necessary and sufficient condition to achieve language proficiency (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

This short-sighted understanding of language learning widely found in traditional methods to language instruction have made visible the necessity to make a change in the agenda of SLA and, therefore, English Language Teaching (ELT). Current trends to language education such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning (TBLT) approach have started to change those traditional conventions in ELT where they had thus far proven ineffective. Hence, with the emergence of these new language pedagogies, it has been already acknowledged that language is not only a system made up of words and grammatical structures but a much more complex reality of which most basic function is the expression of meanings (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002; House, 2007; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). In the same way, it has also been recognized the need to strive for a more naturalistic language learning process that engages learners in meaningful interaction, closer to the way the L1 is actually acquired (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1996;

Foster, 1999; Skehan, 2003). Language is, therefore, best understood as a communicative reality to be practiced rather than simply a code to be learnt.

Despite these profound changes in the conception of language and SLA, it has been observed that the intercultural component implied in any FL curriculum is still set aside as a superfluous target to attain (Corbett, 2003). The rationale for the integration of language-and-culture teaching lies on the inescapable fact language and culture go hand in hand in that language is a means whereby we can access a new culture (House, 2007; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Moeller & Nugent, 2014); not to mention the fact that the effect of globalization is fostering the coexistence of innumerable languages and cultural practices in the same space (Moeller & Nugent, 2014), thus making clear the urgent need to equip language learners with the necessary tools to appropriately engage in intercultural encounters (Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoin-Gaillard & Philippou, 2014). As a result, it has long been advocated that, along with the linguistic competence, students need to be able to communicate, to understand and build relationships with members of other cultures by keeping an attitude of openness, accepting cultural difference and challenging issues that may arise in a multilingual and multicultural scenario such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination or racism (Barrett et al., 2014; Moeller & Nugent, 2014). In short, it is indispensable for foreign language users to become optimal intercultural citizens in a world of ever-expanding and ever-mixing diversities as part of their communicative ability (Byram et al., 2002; Barrett et al., 2014; Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

This is precisely on the key precepts of this master. From a professional perspective, the MELACOM master seeks to provide English language teachers with an “excellent training in applied linguistics and language teaching/acquisition in bilingual communities which are points of arrival of immigrant people” (Universitat Jaume I,

2015, p.1). Hence, it aims at sensitizing teachers on the issue of interculturality especially in those contexts where intercultural contact is commonplace.

This said, the aim of this paper is, therefore, to provide a workable teaching proposal that integrates the best of TBLT and intercultural education without compromising the ultimate objectives of developing an appropriate and effective language proficiency as well as a solid intercultural awareness respectively. The overall structure of this paper takes the form of four themed chapters. Chapter 2 begins by laying out the theoretical foundations of the assignment by first reviewing the existent literature and research on CLT, TBLT and interculturality, which are the central topics of my thesis. Chapter 3 presents a model of task that draws on the applicability and potential of TBLT as far as SLA is concerned while at the same time shows how such an approach may be adapted for the purposes of an integrated foreign language (FL) and intercultural competence (IC) education. Finally, Chapter 4 will suggest ways in which learners' progress may be assessed when it comes to language skills and intercultural sensitivity, while at the same time it will attempt to anticipate the expected results arising from the application of such a teaching proposal. Before that, the following subsection will outline the educational context for which this task has been designed.

1.1. The Educational Context

My activity as trainee English teacher was developed in the state school CEIP Isabel Ferrer which is a recently created centre whose activity officially started in 2003. This educational institution operates in Castelló de la Plana, city located in the region of La Plana Alta which itself belongs to the territory of the Valencian Community within the Spanish State.

Right on the north-west outskirts of the city, considered an area of urban expansion comprised of newly created neighbourhoods, CEIP Isabel Ferrer started its activity with the aim to cover the educational need of a growing number of families living nearby. As a result, the school is surrounded by a relatively new residential area mainly consisting of blocks of flats where middle-class families live. With respect to the school infrastructures, the centre is comprised of two main modules: a building destined to primary education and a smaller one devoted to the education of preschoolers from 3 to 5 years old. Along with these, a gym, a small vegetable garden and three playgrounds of different size make up the rest of the school amenities. What is more, classrooms in this centre are well-equipped with advanced educational resources and innovative facilities, such as the interactive whiteboards, both teachers and students can benefit from by having access to the internet and other audiovisual materials.

CEIP Isabel Ferrer is an educational centre of medium size which hosts an average of 300 students, 30 teachers and covers nine different levels of infant and primary education ranging from 1st grade of preschool to 6th grade of primary school (CEIP Isabel Ferrer, 2012). Yet, it should be noted that the language pedagogies here below proposed have been purposely designed to apply for a class of learners enrolled in 2nd grade of primary education in so far as my teaching practice was exclusively limited to the three levels of infant education as well as 1st and 2nd of primary school in accordance with my supervisor's pedagogical plan. Regarding the daily class schedule, learners received a total of 6 classes of 45 minutes each which were distributed into morning and afternoon sessions: 4 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. It is here important to note that out of the 36 classes every learner received per week, around the 8% were devoted to the English subject, which means that learners were weekly

exposed to 135 minutes of English language teaching and learning, proportionally distributed in 3 different classes of 45 minutes each.

Turning now the students' profile, it was interesting to find a noticeable heterogeneity in terms of origin, culture and language use among children. Despite the fact that most members of the student community have a local origin, the school has been notably nourished with children from a variety of sociocultural backgrounds due to the migration movements of the past decades. Of these, most foreign students are native to countries from South America (Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Argentina, Peru and Venezuela), the north of Africa (Morocco), Eastern Europe (Romania and Bulgaria) and Asia (China) (CEIP Isabel Ferrer, 2012). Therefore, in addition to the native languages of our region (Spanish and Catalan), it was also possible to find instances of Latin American dialects of Spanish as well as instances of languages such as Arabic, Romanian, Bulgarian and Chinese, which altogether make up an extraordinarily diverse linguistic landscape (CEIP Isabel Ferrer, 2012; Porcar, 2013). In this respect, it was positive to find that not only students but also parents bring about input from very different cultures as well as from different languages, thus fostering the development of an enriched environment from the point of view of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

As a reaction to the sociolinguistic situation of the territory as well as the growing need to prepare students for an increasingly multicultural world, the educational community of this school has opted for the development of a plurilingual educational program (Porcar, 2013). As explained earlier, the Valencian Community is a bilingual territory where both Spanish and Catalan have granted the status of co-official languages. However, they are immersed in a situation of diaglossia where the presence of Catalan remains somewhat limited in favour of Spanish, which has developed as the majority language throughout the territory. It is for this reason that

CEIP Isabel Ferrer has adopted Catalan as the vehicular language of the school aimed at reinforcing the presence and usage thereof (Porcar, 2013). Specifically, such linguistic policy implies that Catalan is the language to be used as the means of communication in areas such as administration, managing, pedagogical planning and interrelationship with families; while at the same time the development of an equivalent linguistic competence in Spanish and a working knowledge of English as a foreign language are also guaranteed (Porcar, 2013). With respect to the latter, the increasing popularity of English and its subsequent establishment as a lingua franca worldwide have motivated the need to include English acquisition as a key curricular objective in education.

Average learners' command of the English language in this school is limited due to their age and the scarce exposure they have had in the English language but it is sufficient for them to comprehend basic language structures, respond to commands and provide simple responses. Thus, not only primary but also preschool classes were almost entirely conducted in English, with more linguistic complexity added in each grade. Yet, learners were not prevented from using languages other than English itself. Instead, far from considering intrusive instances from diverse linguistic practices brought by learners in the classroom, they were accepted as supportive tools for the understanding and therefore acquisition of an additional, in this case, foreign language. Thus, multilingualism is here felt as a facilitating factor rather than a pitfall for the development of English language proficiency. Needless to say, the use of English was highly promoted over the use of other languages among students in every exchange within the ELT classroom.

Apart from formal instruction in the school, children receive little or no input from the target language outside the school context. Mass media, be it television, cinema, radio, newspapers or magazines, are Spanish-based or to a smaller percentage

Catalan-based where instances of foreign languages are scarcely found. What is more, when it comes to foreign production, the preferred option for films, cartoons and TV series is dubbing over broadcasting the original version with either Spanish or Catalan subtitles, an issue which is widespread throughout the country (Rubio Alcalá & Martínez Lirola, 2012). However, it was noticed that learners were familiar with some general, sometimes stereotypical, features of the North-American and British cultures due to their big influence in the economic, political and, more importantly, audiovisual sectors. As it might be expected, learners had little references of other English-speaking countries, cultures or communities.

So far this paper has briefly presented the main themes to be tackled in this thesis, outlined some of key objectives behind the following teaching proposal and provided a comprehensive overview of the contextual, cultural and sociolinguistic aspects shaping the background of the educational institution for which the below materials have been devised. Chapter 2 proceeds to examine the existing literature on the topics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and intercultural education within language teaching contexts.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over the last two decades we have witnessed a rapid growth in demand for language teaching and learning. Factors such as migration and globalization together with the emergence of the internet have triggered an extraordinary spread and diversification of languages and cultures across the world, thus evidencing the need to be prepared for such a multilingual and multicultural panorama, which is already today's world order (Corbett, 2003; Edwards, 2009; British Council, 2013; Barrett et al., 2014; Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

Within such a period of sociocultural, demographic, technological and, therefore, linguistic revolution, English is by far the language that has suffered the greatest expansion and exerted the greatest influence at a global scale. Established as a lingua franca worldwide, English has evolved as the language for international communication in business, science, academia, information technology and diplomacy (Edwards, 2009; British Council, 2013). As a result, the British Council (2013) has reported that the mastery English has already become a major goal for more than 1 billion people around the world and it has been established as a core subject within most schools' curricula (Barrett et al., 2014). What is more, such a massive interest in ELT and foreign language teaching in general have motivated lots of research in the sphere of language education which, in turn, have led scholars, schools and educators to question the effectiveness of skills that had been taught in the S/FL classroom so far.

Among the various theories that were put into question back in the late 1960s, two outstanding models such as the Grammar Translation Method or the Audiolingual Method received most of the criticisms as they had traditionally regarded language simply as a code comprised of vocabulary and grammar rules that needed to be mastered in order to become a competent user of the TL (Foster, 1999; Skehan, 2003; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). In the former, a focus on form was prioritized over a focus on meaning whereas the later exclusively prioritized oral proficiency by completely disregarding accuracy. If proponents of the Grammar Translation method relied on grammar explanations and translation activities, those of the Audiolingual method opted for drill activities based on the repetition of language structures in so far as they viewed language learning as a process of habit formation (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006; Brandl, 2008). Whatever the approach, they failed to find a balanced and effective development of the fluency and accuracy abilities and,

most importantly, they did not encompass all those aspects that characterize language as a communicative reality since learners did not have the chance to engage in a meaningful use of the TL (Brandl, 2008; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

Such a narrow understanding of language was consequently followed by an ill-conceived teaching methodology which, despite the shift in the way second language acquisition is understood nowadays, is surprisingly still deeply ingrained in today's language teaching classrooms. We refer here to the PPP model which divides the lesson into three definite stages: 'presentation, practice and production' (Foster, 1999, p.69). First, learners are explicitly *presented* with a particular grammatical feature of the TL in line with the assumption that language is best learned when sequenced and provided into small chunks of gradual difficulty (Foster, 1999; Richards, 2005; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). This is followed by a *practice* stage where learners apply the target grammatical structure by using analogy in out-of-context activities usually consisting of drills (Foster, 1999; Richards, 2005; Brandl, 2008). Finally, learners are given the opportunity to produce language, albeit in a controlled way since they are only expected to repeat the targeted language structure. Therefore, learners are in fact prevented from using language creatively (Foster, 1999; Brandl, 2008). What is more, errors are here felt problematic in that they are the result of unsuccessful learning (Foster, 1999; Brandl, 2008).

The lack of support for these methods brought about a period of instability in the field of SLA that was in need of a new model that would disassociate from such a long-lasting, yet ineffective, tradition (Skehan, 2003; Brandl, 2008; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). The key turning point was the inception of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) which emerged as a reaction to that

simplistic view of language instruction which had heavily relied on structure-based teaching.

2.1. Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emerged in the 1970s to challenge traditional language teaching theories by emphasizing on the idea that language needed to be understood not only as a code made up of words and grammatical structures but also as a social practice whereby language users “express, create and interpret meanings and establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships” (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p.16). That is, language is a means of making sense of the world as well as a means of creating and keeping the social bonds between and among the members of the language community (Corbett, 2003; House, 2007; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). It is for this reason that being competent in a given language entails more than being able to use the linguistic system, it implies using it appropriately and effectively in the social and cultural context where the communicative exchange is taking place (Byram et al., 2002; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008).

Rather than a teaching method, CLT is best understood as a paradigm which encompasses a series of principles on how to view and handle L2 teaching where the triggering force is always communication (Brandl, 2008; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). First, for a pedagogical practice to qualify as a communicative-oriented approach it should distance from the idea that language items can be sequenced in the process of language development considering the fact that, as Pienemann has shown (1989, as cited in Brandl, 2008), learners acquire the TL in such a way that can neither be predicted nor pre-programmed. In the same way, errors are not longer to be considered a pitfall for the development of L2 proficiency, but rather a natural trait of the learning

process itself which, on the top of that, has the potential of furthering learning by creating opportunities for the negotiation of meaning and feedback (Foster, 1999; Brandl, 2008; García Mayo & Alcón Soler, 2013). Secondly, as opposed to the teacher-fronted perspective found in traditional methodologies, any CLT method should also acknowledge the need to place the learner at the centre of the class for he/she is an active contributor to the learning process rather than a passive participant thereof (Brandl, 2008). It is for this reason that instructors should take into account individual learner factors such as their sociocultural backgrounds, personalities, motivation, attitudes, needs and interests to make the most of the envisaged classroom pedagogical practices (Brandl, 2008). Last but not least, any communicative-based practice should aim at fostering interactive exchanges by means of authentic-like materials that recreate real-world processes (Foster, 1999; Skehan, 2003; Brandl, 2008).

Briefly, supporters of the new communicative approach to language instruction (Krashen, 1981; Foster, 1999; Skehan, 2003) have claimed that, in order to guarantee the successful development of learners' communicative competence (CC), they need to be exposed to a more naturalistic language learning process, closer to the way children acquire their first language (L1), where meaningful interaction and, consequently, the negotiation of meaning take place. But, before moving on, it is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by 'communicative competence', a term that was first used by Hymes back in 1972 to refer to the knowledge of not only grammar rules but also rules of language use that enable the speaker to employ the linguistic system appropriately in a given social context (Brandl, 2008; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). Nonetheless, 'communicative competence' is in fact an umbrella term which covers a wide range of abilities that have been formulated, reformulated and expanded by authors such as Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), among others

(as cited in Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). Although different models have been proposed by the above mentioned authors to define CC and determine the relationship among the various components underlying this notion, the author of this paper is closer to the framework presented by the researchers Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor (2006) in that they claim for a clear relationship among all the sub-competences (i.e. discourse, linguistic, strategic, pragmatic, and intercultural) while at the same time highlight the equal importance of all of these in shaping a speaker's communicative ability (See Figure 1).

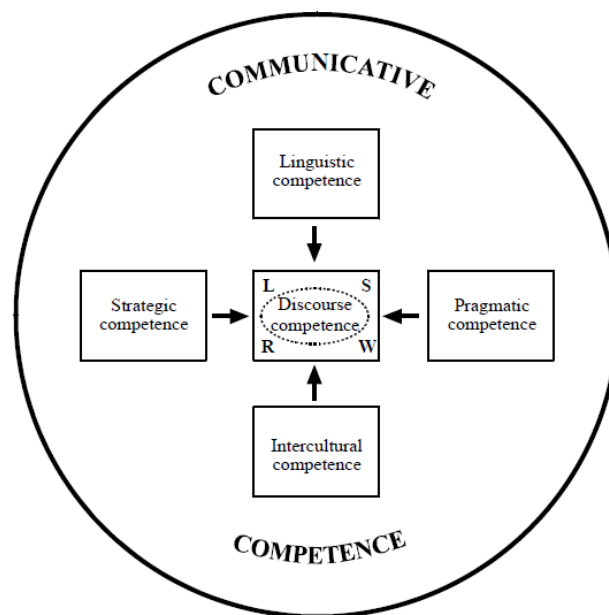


Figure 1. Communicative Competence framework proposed by Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor (2006, p.16)

Yet, given the focus of this project which holds the idea that intercultural awareness is a key asset as part of any learner's overall communicative ability, the most important contribution of Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) framework is the importance they assign to the intercultural component within the CC construct which is no longer relegated to a secondary position or completely disregarded, as seen in previous models of the communicative ability, but placed at the same level as other

well-recognized subcompetences. Along with the *discourse* (i.e. “ability to select and sequence utterances or sentences”), *linguistic* (i.e. ability to use the linguistic system), *pragmatic* (i.e. “knowledge of the illocutionary force implied in an utterance as well as the implicit sociolinguistic factors”) and *strategic* (i.e. “knowledge of learning and communication strategies”) competences, the *intercultural competence* (i.e. “ability to interpret and produce a piece of discourse within a particular sociocultural context”) is fully recognized as a key element in building learners’ communicative competence in the target language (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008, p.161).

Hence, as far as language teachers need to develop competent users of a S/FL and prepare them for the demands of an increasingly multicultural world, it is imperative to incorporate intercultural education as a key curricular objective. Yet, Section 2.3. will address the intercultural dimension of second language learning in more detail. The following section will provide a review of existing literature and research work on the applicability and potential of the task-based approach to second or foreign language instruction.

2.2. Task-Based Language Teaching

The CLT movement prompted the proliferation of different methodologies that shared the same objective of developing learners’ communicative skills but differed in the best way to do it. Of these, an approach supporting the use of tasks as the main element prompting social interaction within the S/FL classroom started to take hold among a growing group of theorists within the communicative-oriented research community (Long, 1996; Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2005; Skehan, 2005). Proponents of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, also known as Task-Based Instruction (TBI), claimed that by engaging learners in meaningful conversational

interaction through the performance of tasks they would effectively develop communicative competence in the TL (Prabhu, 1989; Long, 1996; Willis, 1996; Skehan, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

At this point there is a need to be explicit about what is exactly meant by the term ‘task’. In broad terms, task tends to be used to refer to any piece of work that requires some kind of effort. However, this is a too vague definition which does not reflect the real nature of a task-oriented approach to language instruction. For Willis (1996), a task in the context of language pedagogy is an “activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose to achieve an outcome” (p.23). Yet, despite the various definitions suggested, there seems to be some kind of consensus on the requisites any classroom activity should have to qualify as a task; these are: a) a focus on *meaning*, b) a clearly defined *communicative outcome*, c) a focus on some *knowledge ‘gap’*, and d) an emphasis on *real world processes* of language use that involves the use of one or more language skills (Richards, 2005; Brandl, 2008; Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

This new understanding of S/FL instruction was, moreover, very much influenced by Long’s (1996) Interaction Hypothesis which claimed that there is a strong correlation between interaction and SLA in that it provides learners with opportunities to obtain comprehensible input by means of the negotiation of meaning and the provision of feedback, both responsible for eliciting the necessary linguistic adjustments in the learners’ output towards target-like forms (as cited in García Mayo & Alcón Soler, 2013). Such cooperative and collaborative approach to language learning with task-mediated interaction at the core has been reported as a highly effective facilitator of L2 development by a growing body of research (Skehan, 2003; Keck et al., 2006, as cited in Brandl, 2008; De la Fuente, 2006, as cited in Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Shintani,

2013, as cited in Ellis & Shintani, 2013), which on the top of that sees TBLT in an advantageous position with respect to more traditional language teaching methods when it comes to achieving higher levels of success in the process of S/FL development. Figure 2 illustrates the process of language development as theorised by Long and supported by TBLT theories.

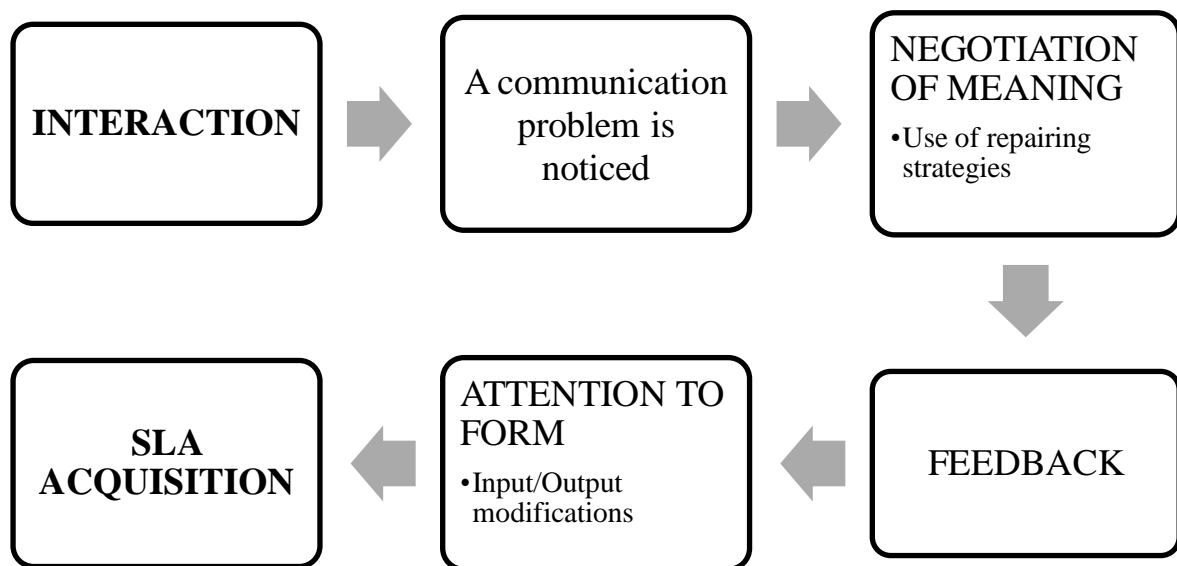


Figure 2. Language learning model according to Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis.

Far from what it might be expected, TBLT does not neglect a focus on form despite its emphasis on meaningful communication, but pretty much the opposite; it recognises the need to integrate a focus on linguistic accuracy in a way that does not compromise the main function of language, that is, the transmission and exchange of information (Long, 1996, as cited in García Mayo & Alcón Soler, 2013; Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 2003; Brandl, 2008; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). However, the way task-based pedagogy deals with the acquisition of target language forms differs from that adopted by more traditional methods to L2 teaching such as the PPP, which relies on the sequencing and presentation of decontextualized and ready-made grammar rules; that is,

one structure at a time (Sheen, 2002; Skehan, 2003; Richards, 2005; Brandl, 2008; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). Such traditional approach to grammar instruction known as ‘focus on formS’ (FonFs) contrasts with the ‘focus on form’ (FonF) approach proposed by Long which suggests that attention to particular structures of language should only be drawn in those cases when a lack of knowledge is impeding the maintenance of the communicative exchange (Sheen, 2002; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). In so doing, it is only when a communication breakdown is noticed during the performance of a task that interlocutors activate the necessary mechanisms that enable the negotiation and modification of deficient input or output instance/s (García Mayo & Alcón Soler, 2013). Such mechanisms that facilitate both successful comprehension and production include *comprehension checks* (i.e. utterances that seek whether the listener has actually understood the speaker’s own utterance), *confirmation checks* (i.e. utterances that seek confirmation of the correct comprehension of other’s utterance), *clarification requests* (i.e. utterances encouraging the reformulation of the interlocutor’s deficient form/s) and *recasts* (i.e. actual reformulation of the problematic utterance), which in turn have proven to be extremely powerful triggers of SLA as they provide opportunities for learners to attend to linguistic form in context, thus emphasizing form-meaning relationships (Ellis, 2005; Brandl, 2008; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; García Mayo & Alcón Soler, 2013).

This tension between a focus on form and a focus on meaning has, however, become a major concern for the proponents of the TBI approach (Foster, 1999; Skehan, 2003; Ellis and Shintani, 2013) as well as one of the main points of criticism of much of the literature (Sheen, 1994; Seedhouse, 1999; Swan, 2005), which considers that the way task-based syllabus is conceived jeopardises the learning of grammar. Yet, authors such as Skehan (2003), Willis (1996) and Ellis and Shintani (2013) have responded to

such misinterpretations by claiming that a balanced development of the fluency and accuracy dimensions will always be possible in the context of a task-based classroom in so far as an appropriate choice, sequencing and implementation of tasks have been carried out.

Whereas most critiques have concentrated on questioning tasks potential to effectively promote linguistic accuracy, few writers have been able to highlight the scarce importance contemporary language teaching methods give to developing learners' intercultural competence, not to mention the poor attempts language pedagogy has thus far made to integrate the cultural dimension in the language classroom (Corbett, 2003). What follows is a review of the existent literature and research on the issue of interculturality within the framework of S/FL learning with an emphasis on tasks potential to successfully promote not only linguistic development but also intercultural dialogue.

2.3. Interculturality and language education

To fully understand what the intercultural competence entails, it will be necessary to clarify first the concept of 'culture' and its relationship with respect to the nature of language and the goal of language learning, and at the same time, these two with respect to the notion of 'interculturality'.

Although the term *culture* embodies a multitude of concepts, it can be briefly defined as the sum of the artefacts (i.e. objects, clothing, foods, works of art, etc.), social institutions and symbols (i.e. *language*, folklore, laws, religious practices, etc.) produced by and/or experienced by a particular society together with those beliefs, values, social conventions, customs and attitudes shared and internalized by its members which ultimately shape their behaviour and understanding of the world

(House, 2007; Celce-Murcia, 2008; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Barrett et al, 2014). Therefore, given the fact that language is always used within a cultural framework and that messages channelled by each code are constructed and interpreted on the basis of the context where they are transmitted, language instructors and language researchers (Kramsch, 1995; Byram et al., 2002; Corbett, 2003; Paricio, 2005; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Young & Sachdev, 2011) have always acknowledged the need to include some kind of cultural learning in language teaching contexts in order to facilitate successful communication exchanges in the TL.

However, data from several sources (Byram et al., 2002; Skopinskaja, 2003; Paricio, 2005; Sercu, 2006; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013a; Barrett et al., 2014) has revealed that attempts made to integrate culture teaching within foreign language classrooms have in many instances proven inadequate by just presenting static, simplistic and stereotypical descriptive information of the target language society, with an especial emphasis on surface cultural facts, rather than empowering learners with those tools that enable them to explore, analyse and interpret by themselves such cultural differences. Because culture is not a static but an ever-changing reality, acquiring the complete knowledge of it is merely an unattainable chimera (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Barrett et al, 2014).

A more coherent and sensible perspective integrating culture teaching within foreign language curriculum has been proposed by authors such as Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1995), who argue that the objective is not for learners to handle every single piece of information contained in the culture, which itself contains an indefinite number of subgroups with different cultural practices which are in constant change, but for them to develop the ability to effectively and appropriately engage in communication encounters with people bearing different cultural backgrounds by being able to suppress

prejudice and acquire an attitude of tolerance and openness. That is, the goal is to develop learners' the ability to appropriately deal with 'interculturality' (i.e. interaction between cultures), an ability frequently referred to as 'intercultural competence'.

2.3.1. Intercultural competence

Defining the notion of 'intercultural competence' is not an easy undertaking. For Moran (2001, p.5) an interculturally competent speaker is one that has "the ability to enter other cultures and communicate effectively and appropriately, establish and maintain relationships, and carry out tasks with people of these cultures" (as cited in Skopinskaja, 2003). A generally accepted definition of intercultural competence and/or intercultural speaker is lacking, though.

Although different opinions exist, Byram's Model of Intercultural Competence (1997) identifies a combination of three components any foreign language speaker should have to be interculturally competent: a) *knowledge*, b) *attitudes* and c) *skills*. Byram (1997) and Byram et al. (2002) use the term *knowledge* to refer to the awareness of one's own and the target language cultures as well as awareness of how the perception of other groups is conditioned by our own cultural framework. In order to challenge stereotypes and prejudices about other cultures, foreign language learners should also possess interculturally-oriented *attitudes* of tolerance, respect and openness towards members with different cultural backgrounds as well as the willingness to communicate and establish relationships with them (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). Finally, *skills* refer to the abilities of interpreting and relating behaviours, norms or beliefs from other cultures with those of our own as well as the abilities to discover and acquire new cultural knowledge (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). Intercultural skills also include the ability effectively interact in intercultural encounters by taking

advantage of such an enhanced overall intercultural awareness (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). From this new understanding of cultural instruction as an integral part of SLA, it can definitely be concluded that “the intercultural [dimension] is not the same as culture but is a process that goes beyond the idea of ‘knowing a culture’” (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p.19).

What is more, well-recognized institutions such as the Council of Europe and publications such as the ‘Common European Framework of Reference for Languages’ (Byram et al., 2002; Barret el al., 2014) have underlined the vital importance of including, along with a linguistic competence, intercultural understanding as a key curricular goal within language education for the purposes of a building a solid democratic society which faces an increasingly culturally diverse environment and is, therefore, the scenario of commonplace everyday intercultural encounters. In this sense, intercultural speakers are not only expected to transmit accurate messages in the TL but also to do it in an appropriate way by managing possible misunderstandings that may arise in these exchanges (Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Sercu, 2006). The ultimate goal is to facilitate the coexistence and communication among people of different cultural orientations that live in the same space by raising citizens’ awareness on the value of cultural diversity, tolerance and mutual understanding (Byram et al., 2002; Barrett et al., 2014).

Yet, despite the many claims, it has been observed that the acquisition of an intercultural competence involved in the communicative ability is, in most cases, either an overridden objective at the expense of linguistic proficiency or an inadequately tackled dimension within not only outdated language teaching settings but also by more contemporary proposals to language learning such as CLT and TBLT (Corbett, 2003). Instead of providing learners with opportunities to mediate between their own culture

and that of the foreign community by challenging pre-conceived attitudes and beliefs about different cultural orientations (Byram et al., 2002), most FL teaching pedagogies have further contributed to accentuate misleading cultural differences which jeopardize the resolution of possible cultural misunderstandings (Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Skopinskaja, 2003; Sercu, 2006; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008).

Among the various factors that have been suggested to account for such an inadequate treatment of the cultural and intercultural dimension of languages within language learning settings, there are five which have been proposed to stand out above the rest: a) the *curriculum constraints*, b) the *time limitations*, c) the use of *inadequate materials*, d) the *lack of an appropriate teacher training* and, e) the deep-rooted *misconceptions on the ultimate objectives of foreign language learning* (Corbett, 2003; Sercu, 2006; Usó-Juan & Martínez Flor, 2008; Young & Sachdev, 2011, p.82).

Many teachers have often professed a feeling of constraint by an inflexible curriculum which is in most cases imposed by entities such as the educational institutions they are working for or the national educational system itself, thus leaving instructors with little room for manoeuvre when it comes to deciding the contents to be taught (Paricio, 2005; Usó Juan & Martínez Flor, 2008; Sachdev & Young, 2011). As a result, curriculum design is more often than not decided on the basis of the external institutions' criteria rather than on the basis of learners' needs or interests, who have often admitted some kind of interest on inter/cultural learning according to various reports (Paricio, 2005; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Barrett et al., 2014). Nonetheless, this still tends to be a neglected goal by most official curricula (Barrett et al., 2014).

A number of studies (Skopinskaja, 2003; Sercu, 2006; Níkleva, 2012) have shown that an inadequate focus on the cultural content found in a great deal of language

teaching materials is also exerting a detrimental effect on the pursuit of intercultural exploration. First, the fact that cultural and intercultural instruction is relegated to a secondary position in favour of linguistic development is still a widespread issue throughout most language coursebooks (Skopinskaja, 2003; Níkleva, 2012). Secondly, it has been observed that most of FL teaching materials fail in transmitting a realistic picture of the target language society by frequently stressing on social stereotypes which do not help but strengthen problems of prejudice (Skopinskaja, 2003; Paricio, 2005; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Níkleva, 2012). Finally, the scarce presence of authentic materials (i.e. excerpts from newspapers, TV programs, books, etc.) within language coursebooks has been recognized as another area of concern among teachers and researchers alike (Skopinskaja, 2003).

As regards FL instructors' contribution to the development of learners' intercultural awareness, data from several sources has indicated that just a small number of teachers consider ICC as a key curricular objective and a very few are able to apply appropriate techniques that seek the acquisition of such target (Sercu, 2006; Usó Juan & Martínez Flor, 2008; Young & Sachdev, 2011). In a study which set out to determine English language teachers' beliefs and practices with respect to the construct of intercultural competence, Young and Sachdev (2011) found that most instructors were unable to implement appropriate intercultural activities in the classroom despite the fact that they recognised the great value of developing learners' ICC. Similarly, Sercu's (2006) investigation of foreign language teachers' abilities in contemporary classrooms reported that there is a generalized lack preparation among language educators to appropriately adapt deficient language teaching materials which meet the demands of an effective intercultural education. The fact that most FL instructors lack the necessary

skills that guide learners to achieving intercultural competence has led some scholars to advocate for the implementation of some kind of teacher training (Sercu, 2006).

Last but by no means least, the long-standing yet inadequate ideal of the native speaker as the reference model to imitate by foreign language learners has hindered the real purposes of SLA so far (Byram et al., 2002; Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Corbett, 2003; House, 2007; Young & Sachdev, 2011). From such perspective, L2 users are seen as deficient non-native speakers who are often involved in cross-cultural misunderstandings rather than, as targeted by interculturality-based approaches to language pedagogy, privileged mediators between two cultural realities who are able to effectively communicate in a varied number of sociocultural contexts (Byram et al., 2002; Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; House, 2007). In order to develop successful users of the TL, authors such as Byram et al. (2002) have raised their voice on the need to substitute the model of native speaker by that of intercultural speaker as a more realistic target to attain who, needless to be said, is also linguistically competent.

Having discussed the objectives and importance of an interculturality-based language education, the following section proposes task-based language teaching as the most favourable context to acquire intercultural communicative competence. This is intended to resolve the above-commented issues on the implementation of an interculturality-based language approach and to suggest practical ways by which learners can effectively develop those mechanisms that will enable them to respond to the demands required by intercultural exchanges taking place in an increasingly globalized world.

2.3.2. Intercultural approach to TBLT

Despite the claim that “with their focus on meaning, interaction, sharing and negotiating tasks create an effective and motivating learning environment for intercultural learning” (Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b, p.2), different authors have asserted that such potential of TBI for furthering intercultural awareness is being underexploited in language classrooms (Müller-Hartmann, 2000). According to Barrett et al. (2014), task-based language teaching settings are meant to be considered as the most advantageous contexts in the process of becoming interculturally and communicatively competent in so far as:

There is much research indicating that learners learn [to develop as competent intercultural and communicative speakers] better in contexts where lecturing from the front and transmitting information is minimal, and where pedagogical approaches, methods and techniques that encourage learners to become actively involved in discovery, challenge, reflection and co-operation are used instead (p.30).

Such conditions are exclusively created by TBLT pedagogies where the teacher’s role is not so much to transfer students his/her knowledge of the TL but to assist them in communicative interaction while still keeping some kind of distance in order to facilitate independent language and intercultural learning through mutual cooperation (Corbett, 2003). Language instructors involved in TBLT supporting an intercultural perspective make take multiple roles which can range from encouraging learners to solve communication breakdowns by means of form-meaning negotiation, providing feedback, devising traditional-like activities aimed at explicitly addressing those linguistic aspects learners had problems with, to prompting intercultural awareness through the designing of tasks (Corbett, 2003; Skehan, 2003; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b).

Tasks devised to promote linguistic development can also assist intercultural acquisition in the extent to which learners are given the chance to express themselves, to share their knowledge and opinions, to interpret and compare other cultures with respect to their own cultural affiliations and to reflect on their attitudes and feelings (Byram et al., 2002; Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013a; Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b). Interculturally-oriented tasks may also be adapted to raise learners' awareness on differing views while at the same time challenge issues such as stereotyping or prejudicing (Byram et al., 2002). Additionally, collaborative tasks can build on social problem-solving skills necessary to overcome cross-cultural conflicts if they are appropriately designed for that aim (Byram et al., 2002; Barrett et al., 2014). From such an approach specific skills, attitudes and knowledge about a culture will ultimately be provided to learners and so will be an effective acquisition of the TL.

What follows is, therefore, a review of S/FL research which has concentrated on investigating those task factors that have an impact on task performance and, consequently, on the successful development of L2 proficiency and ICC.

2.3.2.1. Intercultural approach to task design

The first steps in the designing of a task-based lesson are: a) to set the *pedagogical goal*, b) to establish the *contents* to be taught in the classroom by carrying out the corresponding needs analysis, c) to analyse and select those *tasks types and materials* that are most suitable for displaying the contents deduced in the previous step and d) to *sequence* these in the most coherent way possible.

First, it is important to consider the main objective of the lesson, which will normally consist of balanced acquisition of linguistic and intercultural skills (Corbett, 2003; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). Once the purposes of the lesson have been

determined, it is necessary to decide on topic and content selection. Contents should not be arbitrarily imposed but based on learners' needs and interests as well as the on the demands required by a successful intercultural education. As for the latter, topic content should encompass general cultural knowledge of the target language-speaking countries (i.e. geography, history, politics, etc.) but also sociocultural aspects such as identity, social norms, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs (Sercu, 1995; Paricio, 2005). Besides, teachers should encourage the discussion, comparison and analysis of controversial issues that may include religion, stereotypes and immigration, among others; while at the same time distance from the tendency to display biased cultural contents by prioritizing the representation of some nationalities over others that may also be representative of the TL (Sercu, 1995; Skopinskaja, 2003; Young & Sachdev, 2011). Instead, the cultural diversity found within the target language community needs to be emphasized by including information from more than one country and, of course, from more than one cultural subgroup (Sercu, 1995).

Secondly, especial attention should be drawn on the sensible choice of task types but also on the appropriate selection of materials. Ellis (2003, as cited in Ellis & Shintani, 2013) argues that tasks can fall into two broad categories depending on whether they have been designed to elicit language samples in general (i.e. *unfocused tasks*) or to implicitly elicit specific language structures by still keeping a focus on meaningful communication (i.e. *focused tasks*). Complementarily, Willis (1996) classifies tasks into six different groups on the basis of activities learners are expected to perform: *listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences* and *creative tasks*. What is more, authors such as Ellis & Shintani (2013) stress on the need to further distinguish between *output-based tasks* if learners are required to work on their speaking and writing skills and *input-based tasks* if they are

expected to work on their listening and reading skills. Whatever the choice, they always should be consistent with the demands of the contents targeted and be accompanied by suitable materials. In this regard, scholars such as Byram et al. (2002) Corbett (2003) and Brandl (2008) highlight the need that, when the use of materials is required for the performance of a task, it is preferable to opt for authentic ones as they have proven to be extremely useful sources of not only real-world language use but also of different cultural perspectives, thus contributing to the development of both communicative competence and intercultural awareness respectively.

Established the pedagogical goal of the lesson and selected the contents, tasks and materials, the final step is to sequence it in the most coherent way possible for the task to be effective. A task sequencing proposal that is sensible with the purposes of intercultural learning was proposed by Müller Hartmann and Shocker-von-Ditfurth (2011, as cited in Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b) according to whom the very first step is to raise *learners' awareness and curiosity about the TL culture*. This is to be followed by a process of *reflection on learners' own cultural orientations*, which will pave the way for the *discovery and understanding of other cultures* and the *acquisition of new perspectives* (Müller Hartmann & Shocker-von-Ditfurth, 2011, as cited in Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b). Once these grounding activities have been accomplished, it will be time to move on the actual *analysis and comparison between the origin culture and the TL culture* by trying to find similarities and differences that exist between the two (Müller Hartmann & Shocker-von-Ditfurth, 2011, as cited in Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b).

Yet, with a good task design it is not enough. If educators want to maximize the possibilities for successful SLA and intercultural learning it is also vital to attend to various implementation factors.

2.3.2.2. Intercultural approach to task implementation

According to Corbett (2005) Skehan (2003) and Ellis & Shintani (2013), key considerations in the implementation of a task are a) *the methodology*, b) *settings* and c) *teacher's and students' role*.

In the structuring of the task, a number of researchers (Willis, 1996; Ellis & Shintani, 2013) have advocated for a 3-phase lesson organization consisting of a pre-task phase, a while-task phase and a post-task phase which can be adapted to enhance intercultural exploration. The pre-task phase is intended to prepare students for the performance of the task by means of introductory activities which activate learners' content knowledge of the topic and expose them to real language use through the use of authentic materials (Willis, 1996, Skehan, 2003, Ellis & Shintani, 2013). The intermediate stage, and also the longest, is devoted to the performance of the task per se, although it also includes the gathering, planning and presentation of task findings (Willis, 1996; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). Finally, the post-task phase allows learners some time to not only reflect on intercultural learning but also to carry out language work which emphasizes on those specific formal aspects that were found problematic during task performance (Willis, 1996; Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b). At this point, those problems in communication and issues related intercultural aspects that emerged during task-initiated interaction can be here tackled in more depth with the objective to develop learners' understanding and acceptance of others' views as well as to initiate positive attitudes towards other cultural practices among the TL students (Mezger-Wendlandt, 2013b). Each stage, however, is not to be strictly followed as described above but rather it is to be adapted at teachers' convenience taking into account learners' level and learners' capacities, task topic, pedagogical objectives as well as the possibilities

available (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). In fact, task phases allow a number of implementation options which have been gathered in the table below (Table 1).

<i>Phases</i>	<i>Pedagogical options which may be included in each stage</i>
Pre-task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Task objectives are introduced b. A model of task performance is provided c. Background information is rendered to activate learners' content knowledge that is relevant to the task d. Target vocabulary is brainstormed e. Specific language structures that are useful for performing a task are elicited f. Some preparation time may also be afforded
While-task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Time limitations are established b. Monitoring and assistance are provided to learners while using the TL
Post-task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Some time is allowed for planning, reporting and commenting on task findings b. Reflection on intercultural learning is highly recommendable at this stage c. Language work which emphasizes on problematic language items may also be included at this point

Table 1. Phases and implementation options within a TBLT lesson (adapted from Willis, 2006; and Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

Apart from the structuring of the lesson, it is also necessary to decide on the task settings (i.e. the participatory structure of the lesson) which can range from “individual work, pair work, and group work to whole-class activities” (Corbett, 2003, p.44). The stance adopted by many scholars is, as one might expect, allowing a combination of different participatory structures in the implementation of each task in order to

maximize opportunities for individual reflection as well as collaborative work so that learners can be exposed to differing views (Corbett, 2003; Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

Even more important than deciding on the task methodology and task settings, is defining teacher's and learners' roles. One of the most remarkable hallmarks of TBLT is the shift from traditional roles assigned to teachers and learners to ones that are more coherent with contemporary communicative language pedagogy. Instead of language students, learners are best understood as 'communicators' (Ellis & Shintani, 2013, p.143). Besides, language learners may take varying degrees of responsibility and autonomy in the performance of tasks as determined by indicators such as learners' proficiency in the L2 or the task demands (Corbett, 2003; Ellis & Shintani, 2013). By contrast, language teachers are not longer considered the carriers of knowledge but rather, as explained earlier, 'facilitators' of the language learning process, monitors in the task performance as well as guides in intercultural exploration that encourages learners to engage in the discovery, analysis and reflection of interculturality (Byram et al., 2002; Corbett, 2003; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Moeller & Nugent, 2014). Additionally, teachers may also develop functions such as devising suitable tasks, addressing learners' knowledge gaps, providing feedback and evaluating progress (Corbett, 2003; Skehan, 2003; Ellis & Shintani).

Not less important is the task of assessing learners' performance and intercultural learning. On the one hand, assessment criteria for task performance should be one that reflects the degree to which the learner has been able to meet the communicative outcome of the task (Skehan, 2003). On the other hand, assessment of intercultural learning, understood as "the measurement or systemic description of a learner's degree of proficiency in intercultural competence" (Barrett et al, 2014, p.34), has become a controversial issue in the field of SLA. However, authors such as Byram

et al. (2002), Barrett et al. (2013) and Moeller and Nugent (2014) are of the opinion that portfolios provide the best conditions for measuring the extent to which learners are able to adopt new perspectives and engage in successful intercultural encounters through self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher-assessment.

3. TEACHING PROPOSAL

Chapter 2 has reviewed existent theoretical background and research work associated with task-based language teaching and intercultural learning. Given the scarce attempts to adopt TBI despite its proven effectiveness to develop SLA and given the scarce attempts to include intercultural education within the language teaching classroom despite its unspoken value, the following teaching proposal aims at:

- evidencing how intercultural education and TBLT can be effectively integrated in the same lesson plan to develop IC and linguistic competence respectively, and;
- demonstrating the potential of authentic materials to initiate intercultural exploration

Due to time limitations and the curriculum constraints this pedagogical proposal could not be applied in the target classroom. Notwithstanding this handicap, we opted for submitting a concrete proposal aimed at exploiting the potential of those materials actually employed in the classroom from the point of view of interculturality and intercultural learning. Main considerations for the devising of the following tasks were: (3.1.) setting and participants, (3.2.) task design, and (3.3.) task implementation.

3.1. *Setting and participants*

The present task has purposely been designed for an ELT setting where learners are only exposed to the English language in formal contexts. More specifically, the target participants are a group of 25 learners enrolled in 2nd grade of primary school in the educational centre of CEIP Isabel Ferrer, located in the city of Castelló de la Plana, Spain. They all belong to the age group ranging from 7 to 8 years of age and they all bear a similar proficiency level in the English language which can roughly be defined as an A1-A2 elementary level. Further details about the educational context and the students' profile were thoroughly outlined and can be found in Chapter 1.

3.2. *Factors considered in task design*

Due to the scope of the following tasks, the whole lesson has been projected to fit 2 different sessions of 45 minutes each. These will consist of 2 main *tasks* which will require learners to (1) share personal information about their daily school routine, and to (2) compare it with that of the target culture by trying to find similarities and differences between the two. The *topic* to be covered is, therefore, that of the school context on the basis that learners' familiarity on this subject area sets the ideal stage for stimulating their curiosity toward new and different practices that are common in the target culture in terms of school subjects, timetables, playground games and food. In this sense, motivation will be enhanced by first allowing learners to talk about themselves (i.e. learners will have the chance to share their own routines and preferences on a normal school day and compare them with those of their classmates), and secondly; by exposing them to audiovisual material where an example of everyday school routine is presented from the point of view of a young British student. These tasks do not require the provision of right answers, but rather, they are intended to set the appropriate arena

for the exchange of information, the negotiation of meaning as well as for intercultural reflection.

As far as *input* is concerned, learners will be exposed to both written and spoken texts arising from a variety of sources: classroom-based talk, teacher-created materials as well as authentic materials. Most of the spoken input will be based on teacher talk consisting of classroom interventions when the provision of some guidelines and explanations for the development of tasks is thought necessary, but more particularly, on teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions when it comes to brainstorming activities, information-sharing activities, brief presentations, and short debates. Authentic input will be supplied by a 5-minute video displaying an example of not only real-world usage of the TL but also of different practices related to the target topic as seen from the perspective of some members of the target language community. Yet, despite the great value of authentic resources, complementary materials created by the teacher may also be supportive of task development in so far as they respond to the underlying goals of the lesson. In this case, learners will be asked to fill in a chart purposely designed to facilitate learners' task of information sharing and comparison on the one hand, and to develop learners' time-telling skills, to elicit the use of present simple when talking about routines and to revise on school-related vocabulary on the other (See Appendices).

Selected *procedures* for this lesson plan will range from individual work, group work to whole-class activities assisted by the teacher. Learners, particularly young learners, will need some monitoring at first so teacher-mediated activities will occupy the initial steps of the task. At this point learners will be encouraged to brainstorm vocabulary on school subjects and to share their timetables with the rest of the class after having been presented with basic guidelines on how to tell the time. As the lesson

progresses, learners will little by little acquire more autonomy and they will move from assisted individual and whole-class activities to group work aimed at enhancing information exchanges on the different school routines found among their peers.

With regard to the *expected outcomes*, this task is not only intended to promote the elicitation of some linguistic and communicative skills but also to emphasize on the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to attain an appropriate intercultural competence. In this respect, apart from developing learners' ability to tell the time, eliciting the use of present simple when referring to repeated actions or reviewing school-related vocabulary, the present proposal is also aimed at raising learners' awareness on the diversity of cultural backgrounds and behaviours surrounding them as well as at enhancing the analysis, discovery and reflection of the target culture by always keeping an attitude of tolerance. Hence, from the point of view of language learners are ultimately expected to strengthen on:

- a) **The use of present simple for routines:** *I wake up at 8 o'clock.*
- b) **Simple time-telling skills (i.e. o'clock, half past, quarter past, quarter to):** *I finish school at 5 o'clock.*
- c) **Expressing likes and dislikes:** *I like eating biscuits for breakfast. I don't like drinking juice.*
- d) **Subjects vocabulary:** *maths, arts, science, PE, music, English, etc.*
- e) **Playground games vocabulary:** *hopscotch, hide and seek, tag, etc.*
- f) **Food vocabulary:** *sandwich, juice, milk, cereals, biscuits, etc.*

From the point of view of intercultural learning, the objective for our students should be to:

- a) understand the rich diversity existing within any cultural group including one's own**
- b) respect and value people with different preferences, behaviours and cultural backgrounds**
- c) develop a curiosity for discovering diverse cultural practices**
- d) tolerate difference**
- e) challenge stereotypes**

Aspects tackled during task design have been thoroughly illustrated and summarized in the table below (See Table 2).

<i>Design feature</i>	<i>Description</i>
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. <u>Intercultural</u>: to raise learners' awareness on the value of diversity as well as on the different patterns of behaviour and social organization that exist in different communities.b. <u>Communicative/Linguistic</u>: To elicit the use of present simple when talking about routines, school-related vocabulary, (i.e. subjects, playground games, school items) as well as food vocabulary. Learners are also expected to learn how to tell the time and express likes and dislikes in the TL.
Input	A mix of brainstormed vocabulary; shared personal opinions, routines and preferences; as well as data from authentic audiovisual materials and teacher-created resources.

Procedures	Individual work, group work, whole-class work and teacher-led discussions.
Expected Outcomes:	
a. Product	a. Finding similarities and differences between learners' own culture and the target culture and understand the many different pictures that can be representative of a given cultural group.
b. Process	b. Use of the present simple, school-related vocabulary as well as vocabulary about food on the one hand, and the development of functions such as expressing likes and dislikes and informing about timetables on the other.

Table 2. Task features

3.3. Factors considered in task sequencing

Having defined task features, this chapter moves on to discuss how this teaching proposal is to be implemented during the two sessions. The author of this paper opted for a 3-phase task sequence in line with propositions made by well-known authors such as Willis (1996) and Ellis (2006, as cited in Ellis & Shintani, 2013). This workplan will include a wide range of activities aimed at promoting both learners' communicative and intercultural competences by triggering the use of the four skills (i.e. speaking, listening, writing and reading) as well as by fostering intercultural understanding.

The pre-task phase, conceived as a grounding stage destined to prepare students for task performance, has been here structured into 4 different steps with 4 definite objectives. *Step 1* encourages learners to retrieve content knowledge about subjects, playground games and food by means of brainstorming activities. *Step 2* will be devoted to develop learners' time-telling skills as this will be necessary to successfully carry out subsequent steps. These two steps are critical to facilitate learners' filling in the chart

about 'My Everyday School Routine' planned at *Step 3* (See Appendices). It is important to note that teacher assistance will be necessary at this stage as learners may face problems when dealing with language work. Teacher can ask aloud individual learners about their routines while moving from table to table in case any clarification or correction is needed. Once learners have finished completing the chart, they will be afforded some time in *Step 4* to discuss and compare in groups of 4 the responses they have provided to questions such as '*What do you like eating for breakfast?*' or '*What playground games do you play during break time?*'. This step will allow learners to engage in conversation while realizing that most classmates bear different preferences and routines to that of theirs. The fact that this class features a rather multicultural background will be highly profitable from the point of view of intercultural exploration and comparison expected at this step. It is for this reason that teacher should sensibly arrange groups for them to be as heterogeneous as possible by mixing students with very different profiles and cultural orientations. It is calculated that the whole pre-task phase will take around the 45 minutes of the first session. Hence, session two will be devoted to task and post-task work.

Before initiating the task cycle in session two, it is advisable to start by refreshing learners' memory on what has been done in the previous session (*Step 5*). If necessary, teacher can revise on those language aspects learners had more problems with such as time-telling skills. Then, they will be briefly introduced what the following task is about. To make the most of the video, it will be screened twice. Screening at *Step 6* is for learners to have the first contact with the audiovisual content and to maximize comprehension possibilities on the subsequent screening. Learners may be also afforded some time before moving on to *Step 7* to comment in groups on those aspects that got their attention from what they had just seen. Before playing the video

for a second time, learners will be provided with ‘Jamie’s School Day’ chart. Instructions for this activity will be to correct errors in the timetable and to provide correct answers to the questions: ‘*What playground games are they playing?*’ and ‘*What do they eat for lunch?*’. The video may be shown up to a third time if teacher deems it appropriate for the oncoming report of results and intercultural analysis. By this time, the while-task phase should have taken around 20 minutes to complete.

Steps 8 and 9 at the post-task phase seek to not only focus on form but also to trigger intercultural reflection. First, learners are expected to compare and share those results they have gathered from the video with those of their group classmates. Each group will select a spokesperson to provide the corrections or response for the item in the chart the teacher asks for. This is also to foster cooperative and collaborative work among learners holding a variety of behaviours and cultural profiles. Meanwhile, the teacher will visualize the results on board and assist learners when any problem is detected. The objective of filling in this table is not so much acquiring linguistic knowledge but transforming into a useful tool for intercultural comparison and analysis in the step that follows. Hence, it is at *Step 9* when intercultural understanding is addressed in depth. In the form of a whole-class debate, learners are invited to contribute their own comments on those aspects they found interesting, curious or strange about the target culture. The role of the teacher will be to direct learners’ attention to those areas which can offer opportunities for comparison, and consequently, the identification of similarities and differences between their school routine and that of Jamie’s; that is, between their culture and the target culture. It is of the utmost importance to make learners aware of the many pictures which can be representative of the English-speaking community and that our understanding of it should not be limited to the idea portrayed in the video in the same way that learners’ culture is not only what

they experience first hand but a much wider reality. Altogether, the whole lesson should have occupied a total of 90 minutes arranged in two different sessions.

Because only a single perspective of the target culture is presented in this lesson, a follow-up project which offers more viewpoints can be initiated through the use of the *eTwinning* platform to further increase learners' intercultural awareness. Launched by the European Commission, *eTwinning* is both an online tool and workspace that encourages school collaboration and allows teachers and learners to share, communicate and develop projects with schools all around Europe (Dragas, 2012). Henceforth, exploiting the potential of this resource for promoting intercultural dialogue I suggest setting up a project where learners from different countries participate to share how their schools are and what they usually do on a normal school day. Learners may upload photographs, posters, PowerPoint presentations and short videos which illustrate their timetables, typical playground games they like playing and food they usually eat. In this way, learners are exposed to more than one picture on the subject matter, realize of the many cultural practices that exist and challenge stereotyping.

The structure of the lesson has been summarized as follows (See Table 3).

<i>Task Phase</i>	<i>Description</i>
Pre-task	1. Brainstorming school-related and food vocabulary (10min) 2. Guidelines on time-telling (10min) 3. Chart completion (15min) 4. Sharing personal routines and preferences (10min)
While-Task	5. Preparation (2 min) 6. 1 st screening of the video and brief discussion in groups (8

	min) 7. 2 nd screening of the video and individual completion of the chart (10 min)
Post-task	8. Language work: report and comments on task findings (10min) 9. Intercultural focus: teacher-mediated analysis and comparison between the origin culture and the target culture (15min)
Follow-up proposal	10. Initiate a project work through <i>Etwinning</i> to share everyday school routines with students from different countries.

Table 3. Task sequencing

4. ASSESSMENT

Probably, one of the most controversial issues facing the fields of task-based language teaching and intercultural education is the assessment criteria used for measuring learning progress; that is, the means to determine the extent to which learners have developed their respective linguistic, communicative and intercultural skills (Byram et al., 2002; Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Skehan, 2003; Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

Formal testing has long been rejected as an objective way to determine learning growth, whether it is linguistic or intercultural development, in so far as learning is not a linear process but a rather instable one in which the learner continually moves back and forth in his/her way towards achieving intercultural communicative proficiency (Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Moeller & Nugent, 2014). That is, learning follows its own internal pace which, on the top of that, is not a regular one. Because

learning cannot be sequenced in a step-by-step process, it has been reported that a reliable assessment should not be limited to a single evaluation but it requires an ongoing monitoring process over an extended period of time (Corbett, 2003). Simply put, it takes time to see changes in concrete the linguistic, communicative, and intercultural proficiencies of language learners.

It is for this reason that, regardless of the type of competence being assessed, a mix of methods aimed at evaluating task performance and implemented at different stages of the learning process is always desirable (Corbett, 2003). Yet, the evaluation of learners' performance within a classroom following an intercultural approach to task-based language teaching urges the teacher to look at more than one aspect of task performance according to the pre-established pedagogical objectives of such framework. Hence, evaluation in this type of setting will take place at three different levels: language, interactive communication and intercultural awareness. Although different opinions exist on how to measure the linguistic and communicative efforts made by the learner during task performance, the complexity-accuracy-fluency (CAF) components of production proposed by Skehan (2003) have gained momentum in the past decades. In addition to evaluating learners' output, it is also important to determine whether they have been able to achieve the communicative outcome for which the task has been designed. Yet, as mentioned before, such recording of learners' competences will be invalid unless compared with data gathered in subsequent tasks.

More difficulties arise, however, when an attempt is made to assess and measure intercultural learning in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Byram et al., 2002; Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Corbett, 2003; Moeller & Nugent, 2014). It may be more or less easy to objectively measure factual knowledge acquired about the target culture, but determining the degree to which learners' attitudes have changed or how their skills

have developed over a period of time is a rather challenging task given the subjectivity of these aspects (Byram et al., 2002; Coperías-Aguilar, 2002; Corbett, 2003). As a reaction to the urgent need to establish a reliable measuring method of intercultural development, authors such as Byram et al., (2002), Corbett (2003) and Moeller and Nugent (2014) have proposed the use of portfolios as a means of assessing and recording learning growth in terms of intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes from the point of view of the learner him/herself. Portfolios prompt learners to take a critical and reflective stance on their own learning and intercultural experiences in the foreign language classroom with the additional advantage of raising their awareness on what they are capable and what they are not capable to do when it comes to intercultural communication. A well-known institution as it the Council of Europe has even developed its own portfolio for the recording of language competences with different written versions which adapt to older and younger learners featuring varying degrees of proficiency in the target language (Byram et al., 2002). Yet, despite the great support towards the adoption of self-assessment portfolios, the most appropriate criteria for the evaluation of intercultural awareness remains unresolved (Corbett, 2003), so it is ultimately educators' choice to decide on the best methods to approach this issue.

Hence, before establishing assessment criteria for the present teaching proposal, it will be necessary first to take into account the pedagogical goals for which this teaching proposal has been designed, the expected outcomes of which are for learners to:

- a. retrieve school-related vocabulary,
- b. be able to use the present simple when talking about routines,
- c. be able to express likes and dislikes,
- d. be able to use simple structures to tell the time,

- e. be able to compare their own culture with the target culture by finding similarities and differences,
- f. understand and value the internal diversity of learners' own culture and other cultures,
- g. respect people with different preferences, values and cultural backgrounds,
- h. develop curiosity toward other cultural practices, and
- i. challenge stereotyping.

Revisited the main goals of the present project, assessment criteria for task performance will combine a variety of methods given the wide scope of the above mentioned expected outcomes. Therefore, for the measuring of linguistic and communicative outcomes (from 'a.' to 'e.'), it will be key to look at the efforts made by each learner on the complexity, accuracy and fluency aspects of production as well as to the variety of lexicon employed. Complementarily, the teacher should also consider the extent to which the learner has been able to share information about his/her school day, to gather target information from the video podcast, and to compare it with its own data by drawing on the similarities and differences between the two. As for the assessment of intercultural outcomes, the teacher may take record on whether learners have effectively achieved outcomes from 'f' to 'i'. As a supportive tool, portfolio work may be initiated to obtain individual data of learners by means self-assessment of intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills over an extended period of time.

5. CONCLUSION

Foreign languages are the richest and most powerful mediums to access new cultures given the inherent cultural load they carry. As a result, language teaching settings have been acknowledged as the most suitable environments to foster

intercultural understanding. As contacts between and among different cultures keep growing and the demands for foreign language teaching and learning keep rising, there will be an increasingly high need to empower language students with the appropriate tools to deal with everyday intercultural encounters in order to ensure the well-functioning and stability of culturally diverse democracies in today's globalized world.

Accordingly, along with the ability to use the code in linguistically effective ways, it is also crucial for foreign language users to be able to successfully communicate, understand and respect people from a variety of cultural backgrounds by challenging contemporary issues such as stereotyping, prejudice, racism or discrimination. It is for this reason that SLA faces the responsibility to equip learners with a solid intercultural competence, which has so far been neglected in the ELT classroom, to appropriately use the target language within multilingual and multicultural environments.

Hence, this project was undertaken to design a teaching proposal demonstrating how intercultural learning and foreign language acquisition can effectively be integrated together into contemporary ELT curriculum which is at the forefront of foreign language acquisition. To do so, a literature review of communicative language teaching was first carried out to contextualize these classroom practices in the present understanding of how languages are learnt and taught. Established the development of communicative competence as the key pedagogical objective of today's language pedagogy, this construct was thoroughly described and so were its integral components with an especial emphasis on the intercultural competence drawing on the scant attention it has received.

What is more, a task-based language teaching approach was here put forward as the most suitable setting for the development of linguistically, socially and interculturally competent S/FL users building on recent evidence from a number of studies. Therefore, the design of this task seeks to not only create opportunities for language acquisition within communicatively meaningful settings but also to promote the development of those skills and attitudes, in addition to cultural knowledge, that are thought necessary to successfully take part in intercultural encounters.

Neither TBLT is the only right approach to achieve SLA and intercultural learning, nor is this proposal intended to be the panacea for the problem of establishing the optimal intercultural orientation to language learning. This is just a modest project which attempts to reflect upon the ultimate goal of language education as well as to shed some more light on the personal, communicative and sociocultural benefits of allowing some space for intercultural education in the S/FL classroom.

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APPENDICES


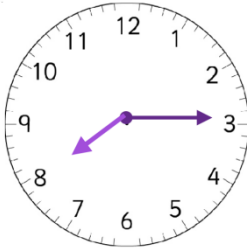

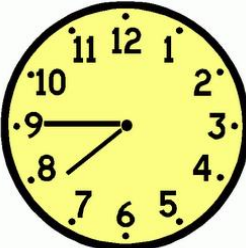
PRE-TASK PHASE

1. **Warm-up (10 min):** learners are briefly explained that the purpose of the lesson is for them to describe how a normal school day is from morning to afternoon and to compare it with that of their classmates. To facilitate this task, they will be first encouraged to retrieve vocabulary about *school subjects*, *playground games* as well as *food* they like eating for breakfast, break time and lunch. While learners take turns to participate, write on the board all those key terms that arise during the brainstorming and further elicit as much as data as possible. Brainstorming may be triggered by inquiring learners about:

- A. *What is/are your favourite subject/s?*
- B. *Which subjects do you hate doing?*
- C. *What do you normally play during break time? And your classmates?*
- D. *What do you like eating for breakfast / break time / lunch?*

What is more, these questions can start raising learners' awareness on the different likes and dislikes, preferences and routines held by their classmates.

2. **Telling the time (10 min).** To describe their daily school routine, learners need to be able to talk about timetables. Teach learners how to tell the time in English but limit to the presentation of four simple structures such as *o'clock*, *half past*, *quarter past* and *quarter to* as they still have an elementary level. You can use the blackboard to draw four clocks representing the above mentioned time lapses. There are some prompts below which can be helpful to develop learners' time-telling skills through a teacher-led activity:

			
I wake up at 8 o'clock . Does anybody wake up at 8 o'clock ?	I usually have breakfast at quarter past 8 . What are you doing at quarter past 8 (random student 1)?	I leave home at half past 8 in the morning. Do you leave home at half past 8 (random student 2)?	I arrive to the school at quarter to 9 . Are you at school at quarter to 9 (random student 3)?

Encourage learners to participate. Yet, do not spend too much time in this step as learners will focus on this skill in the following activity.

3. **Chart completion (15 min).** It is at this point when learners are expected to individually focus on form by filling in the chart with personal information about their school day. This activity prompts to reinforce on previously seen vocabulary, but also to acquire new grammar structures. Distribute a copy of the worksheet found in Table 4 to each learner and give instructions on how to appropriately fill in the chart:

- A. Provide the time for the following events: *wake-up time, breakfast, lessons from 1 to 6 and end of school day.*
- B. Provide true answers for questions: (1) *What do you normally eat for breakfast?*, (2) *What do you like eating for break time?*, (3) *What do you normally do/play during break time?*, and; (4) *What do you like eating for lunch?*

Assist students by moving from table to table in case they face problems with the use of present simple or they have doubts with the vocabulary. Do not forget to insist on the idea that each chart should be personal and kept as faithful to reality as possible.

4. **Sharing and comparing: raising awareness on the internal diversity of cultures**

(10 min). The purpose of this awareness-raising activity is to direct learners' attention towards people around them in order to discover their likes, dislikes, everyday routines and preferences. Students may find this a rather stimulating activity as they have to talk about themselves. By engaging learners in this type of exercise, they will realize that there exist as many differences between their culture and the target culture as among the members who belong to their own cultural framework. Insist on the idea that difference is the norm.

- A. First, organize learners in groups of four individuals featuring different profiles and sociocultural backgrounds to make sure every group is kept as heterogeneous as possible. The fact that this class bears a rather culturally diverse profile will facilitate intercultural reflection and understanding expected at this stage.
- B. Secondly, prompt learners to use their charts as a supportive tool to share their own habits and encourage them to comment on those aspects that got their attention about their classmates' charts. In so doing, students will identify similarities and differences among their own classmates. That is, they will become aware of the internal diversity of cultures.
- C. Devote some minutes to enquire about their findings in the form of a teacher-led activity. You may here more explicitly refer to students who come from as diverse environments as Romania, Bulgaria or China. Ask

questions such as: (1) *Do your groupmates like the same playground games as you?*; (2) *Do your groupmates eat the same food as you?*; (3) *What differences have you found?*, and; (4) *Do you think is positive or negative to be different?*. Explore their attitudes on these topics and initiate attitude transformation towards the value of cultural difference if necessary.

WHILE-TASK PHASE

5. **Warm-up (2 min).** The task cycle will start at session two so it is important to briefly revise on the things learners worked on in the latest class. You may focus on time-telling skills as well as on the use of present simple when talking about repeated actions.
6. **1st screening + group discussion (8min).** Learners are shown the video for the first time so as to raise comprehension possibilities in the second screening. Since learners may be willing to comment on those aspects they found striking about the school day of the British student portrayed in the video, they will be afforded some time for discussion in the same groups that were arranged in session one. It is presumed that free discussions will only focus on differences, so teachers' role will be to raise learners' awareness on the similarities between their culture and the target culture at *Step 9*.



(AnglomaniaPolska, 2011)

*(Press and hold
“CTRL” button
and click on the
picture to access
the video).*

7. **2nd screening + chart completion (10min).** Distribute a copy of ‘Jamie’s School Day’ worksheet to each learner and give instructions for the following task. Tell learners they have to pay careful attention to the video and carry out the following three tasks:
- A. Correct timetables as they are all wrong written,
 - B. Write the name of the subjects Jamie has on such school day, and;
 - C. Provide answers to two questions: (1) *Which playground games are the children in the video playing?* and, (2) *What are they eating for lunch in the canteen?*

Play the video up to a third time if necessary.

POST-TASK PHASE

8. **Gathering results (10 min).** When finished, learners will share their findings with the rest of the class. Allow groups some time to compare their results and select a group representative who will provide answers to those chart items asked by the teacher. This activity encourages them to not only focus on form but also to work on their cooperative and collaborative skills as they have to reach a consensus on what they think are the correct answers. The teacher can facilitate this task by writing answers on the blackboard. Once corrections have been made and doubts have been solved in terms of language, learners will have both charts at their disposal (See Table 4 and Table 5) to explore differences between their own school day and that of Jamie’s.
9. **Intercultural analysis: comparing, contrast and attitude transformation (15 min).** This is probably the most important step in the task. By prompting a whole-class and teacher-led debate to analyse, compare and interpret the Jamie’s school

routine and that of learners' own, the facilitator will create opportunities for students to find similarities and differences between the origin culture and the target culture. This also raises opportunities to tackle previous misconceptions about foreign citizens, either from the target culture or not, and to promote positive attitudes towards difference instead. What is more, learners should be made aware on the fact that such picture shown in the video is not representative of the whole target culture, but rather just another picture within a myriad of practices that comprise the English-speaking culture. Questions that can prompt intercultural analysis are:

- A. Do you wear school uniform? What do you think about wearing school uniform?*
- B. Do you attend an assembly in the morning? What is the assembly about in the video?*
- C. How many lessons have you got per day? And Jamie?*
- D. How many break times do you have each day? How long are your break times?*
- E. Do you have lunch at the canteen or at home?*
- F. What do you eat for lunch? And the students in the video?*

MY SCHOOL DAY

by _____

TIME	ACTIVITIES
__ : __	WAKE-UP
__ : __	BREAKFAST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you normally eat for breakfast?
__ : __	LESSON 1: _____
__ : __	LESSON 2: _____
__ : __	BREAK TIME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you normally eat during break time?
__ : __	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you normally do/play during break time?
__ : __	LESSON 3: _____
__ : __	LESSON 4: _____
__ : __	LUNCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you normally eat for lunch?
__ : __	LESSON 5: _____
__ : __	LESSON 6: _____

Table 4. Chart to be completed by students during task 1.

JAMIE'S SCHOOL DAY

TIME	ACTIVITIES
9 : 00 am	LESSON 1: _____
10 : 15 am	BREAK TIME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which playground games are the children in the video playing? _____
11 : 00 am	LESSON 2: _____
1 : 00 pm	LUNCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are they eating for lunch? _____
	BREAK TIME
1 : 30 pm	LESSON 3: _____
3 : 45 pm	END OF SCHOOL DAY

Table 5. Chart to be completed by students during task 2.